TAO TE CHING RETOLD

THE BOOK OF WISDOM

Truth that can be told is not the eternal truth.
Word that can be spoken is not the eternal word.

Nameless reality is the eternal truth.
The naming is origin of everything.

Free from desires, you realize the mystery.
Caught in desires, you see only the objects.

All objects emerge from the same source.
That source is called the great darkness.

The darkness within darkness, without end.
That is the gateway to all understanding.

When people see some objects as beautiful.
The other objects become ugly.

When people consider some things as good.
The other things become bad.

Being and non-being create each other.
Long and short define each other.

High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.

The sage teaches without saying anything.
The wise acts without doing anything.

The darkness is like an eternal void.
She is filled with infinite possibilities.

She is always present; within and without.
She is even older than the concept of god.

The objects arise and she lets them come.
The objects disappear and she lets them go.

She owns but doesn't possess anything.
She acts but doesn't expect anything.

When her work is done, she forgets it.
That is why she is ever blissful.

When you overestimate great people.
Ordinary people become powerless.

When you overvalue possessions.
The people begin to steal it.

The sage lead by emptying people's mind.
They fill the core by weakening ambitions.

The wise help people empty their minds.
They create confusion among the clever.

When you practice non-doing.
Everything will fall into place by itself.

The darkness doesn't take sides.
She gives birth to both good and evil.

The sage doesn't take sides.
The wise welcome both saint and sinner.

The darkness is like a bellows.
She is empty yet infinitely capable.

The more you talk of darkness.
The lesser you understand it.

Darkness is called the supreme mother.
She gives birth to the infinite worlds.

Darkness is always present within you.
You can use it in any way you want.

The darkness is eternal and infinite.
Why is she eternal?

She was never born.
Thus, she never dies.

Why is she infinite?
Since, she has no form.

She is detached from everything.
Thus, she can be one with them.

The supreme good is like water.
Nourishes all beings without trying.

Content with places that people disdain.
Thus, water is like the darkness.

In dwelling, live close to the ground.
In thinking, keep to the simple.

In conflict, be fair and generous.
In governing, don't try to control.

At work, do what you enjoy.
In family, be completely present.

When you don't compare or compete.
Everyone will respect you.

Fill your bowl to the brim and it will spill.
Keep sharpening a knife and it will blunt.

Chasing after money and security.
Your heart will never find peace.

Care more about people's approval.
You will become their prisoner.

Do your work, then step back.
The only way to serenity.

Can you stop your mind from wandering?
Keeping to the original source.

Can you let your body completely relax?
Can you clean your vision until you see nothing?

Can you love people without imposing your will?
Can you let events take their own course?

Can you let go of your mind?
Thus, understand all things.

Can you give birth without possessing?
Can you nourish without expectations?

Leading and not trying to control.
This is the supreme virtue indeed.

We shape the clay into a pot.
But, emptiness inside holds anything.

We make a house using concrete.
But, space inside makes it livable.

Thoughts weaken the mind.
Desires wither the heart.

The sage observes the world.
But, trusts only the inner vision.

Success is as dangerous as failure.
Hope is as hollow as fear.

Why is success as dangerous as failure?
Your status in society keeps on changing.

When you stand with both the feet.
You will always keep the balance.

Why is hope as hollow as fear?
They arise from the same concept of self.

When we don't see the body as self.
What do we have to fear?

The darkness is beyond all concepts.
Look, and she can't be seen.

Listen, and she can't be heard.
Reach, and she can't be grasped.

Approach her and there's no beginning.
Follow her and there is no end.

You can't know her, but can be her.
This is the essence of true wisdom.

The ancient sages were subtle.
Their wisdom was profound.

There is no way to describe their wisdom.
All we can describe is their appearance.

They were as careful as when crossing a river.
They were alert as warriors in enemy territory.

Courteous as a guest. Fluid as melting ice.
Receptive as a valley. Clear as a crystal.

Can you patiently wait till your mind settles?
Can you remain still till the right action arises?

The sage doesn't seek anything.
The wise can welcome all things.

Empty your mind of all thoughts.
Let your heart be at peace.

Watch the turmoil of all things.
But contemplate the return to source.

Everything in the universe returns to source.
Returning to the source is serenity.

When you don't realize the source.
You stumble in confusion and sorrow.

When you realize the source.
You become amused and detached.

The sage becomes tolerant and kind-hearted.
Always immersed in the wonder of source.

The sage can deal with anything in life.
When death comes, the wise are prepared.

When the sage governs.
The people are hardly aware.

The sage works without any traces.
People say ‘We did it by ourselves’.

Next is a leader who is loved.
The worst is one who is feared.

When you don’t trust people.
You make them untrustworthy.

When the great source is forgotten.
The goodness and religion appear.

When the intelligence declines.
Cleverness and knowledge step forth.

When a country falls into chaos.
Patriotism is born out of it.

Throw away this fake holiness.
People will be a hundred times happier.

Throw away the concept of morality.
People will start doing the right thing.

Throw away business and profit.
There will not be any thieves.

Stop thinking, and end your problems.
No difference between success and failure.

I am like an idiot; my mind is so empty.
Other people seem bright and intelligent.

I alone drift aimlessly.
Other people have a purpose.

I am different from the ordinary people.
I drink from the supreme mother's breasts.

The source is dark and unfathomable.
Even before space and time.

How do I know this is true?
I look inside myself and see.

You want to be whole, let yourself be partial.
You want to be straight, let yourself be crooked.

You want to be full, let yourself be empty.
You want to be reborn, let yourself die.

The sage has nothing to prove.
Thus, the people can trust.

Express yourself, then keep quiet.
Be like the forces of nature.

Open yourself to the source.
Trust your natural responses.

One standing on tiptoe doesn't stand firm.
One who rushes ahead doesn't go far.

One clinging to own work doesn't excel.
Just do your job sincerely, then let go.

Something formless existed before the universe.
It is solitary, unchanging, infinite, and eternal.

The eternal void is mother of the universe.
For lack of a better word, I call it darkness.

The unmoving is the source of movement.
The darkness is the source of light.

A good traveler is not intent upon arriving.
A good explorer has no fixed plans.

A good artist lets intuition lead wherever it wants.
A good scientist is free of all concepts.

The sage is available to all people.
The wise don't reject anyone.

The wise use all situations.
Thus, they waste nothing.

Know the masculine, yet keep to feminine.
Know the white, yet keep to black.

The world is formed out of the darkness.
Sage knows darkness, yet cherishes the world.

Do you want to improve the world?
I don't think it can be done.

The world is a sacred place.
It is perfect and can't be improved.

If you tamper with it, you will ruin it.
If you indulge in it, you will lose it.

There is a time for being ahead.
And, a time for being behind.

There is a time for being in motion.
And, a time for being at rest.

There is a time for being vigorous.
And, a time for being exhausted.

There is a time for being safe.
And, a time for being in danger.

The sage doesn't take sides.
Neither try to control them.

The sage never defeats enemy by force.
For every force, there is a counterforce.

For every action, there is a reaction.
Violence always rebounds upon oneself.

The wise act subtly and then stops.
They know that universe is out of control.

Weapons are tools of mass destruction.
All wise people detest them.

Weapons must be used in the direst situation.
If compelled, use them with utmost restraint.

How can one remain content?
If the peace is shattered.

The enemies are not demons.
But human being like us.

The sage doesn't wish harm to anyone.
Nor does rejoice in victory.

The sage enters a battle with sorrow.
As if attending a funeral.

How could a sage rejoice in slaughter?
The wise are always full of compassion.

The supreme darkness cannot be perceived.
Subtler than atom contains countless galaxies.

Knowing others is intelligence.
Knowing yourself is true wisdom.

Conquering others is strength.
Conquering yourself is true power.

When you embrace death fully.
You will endure forever.

When you want to shrink something.
You must first allow it to expand.

The soft overcomes the hard.
The slow overcomes the fast.

Let your work remain a mystery.
Just show people the results.

The sage doesn't seek power.
Thus, the wise are truly powerful.

The sage does nothing.
Yet leaves nothing undone.

The sage has no self-will.
The wise dwell in reality.

When a superior one hears of source.
That person begins to embody it.

When an average one hears of source.
That person half believes it, half doubts it.

When a foolish one hears of source.
That person laughs out loud and rejects it.

The true power seems weak.
The true purity seems tainted.

The greatest love seems indifferent.
The greatest wisdom seems childish.

The darkness gives birth to One.
One gives birth to Two.

Two gives birth to Three.
Three gives birth to all things.

Ordinary people hate solitude.
But the sage makes use of it.

Money or Happiness: Which is more valuable?
Success or Failure: Which is more destructive?

When you look outside for happiness.
You will never truly be fulfilled.

When you realize there is nothing lacking.
The whole world belongs to you.

True fullness seems empty.
True wisdom seems foolish.

There is no greater illusion than fear.
No greater wrong than defending yourself.

There is no enemy outside.
If you fight, you will lose.

The more you know, the less you understand.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.

The sage is good to both saint and sinner.
Thus, the true goodness is achieved.

In the beginning, there was darkness.
All things emerge from it and return.

Knowing how to yield is the true strength.
Keep moving forward is the true purpose.

Those who know don't speak.
Those who speak don't know.

Let go of fixed plans and concepts.
Life will take its own course.

Try to make people happy.
You will become miserable.

Try to make people good.
You will become bad.

Give evil nothing to oppose.
And, it will disappear by itself.

All streams flow into a sea.
Since, it is situated lower.

The humbler you become.
The greater you are perceived.

Honor can be bought with fine words.
Respect can be won with good deeds.

Prevent trouble before it arises.
Recent error is easy to correct.

I have just three things to teach.
Simplicity, patience, compassion.

Not-knowing is true wisdom.
Presuming to know is a disease.

First realize that you are sick.
You can then move towards health.

Act for the benefit of all.
Do good and move on.

Whoever is stiff and inflexible is dead.
Whoever is soft and yielding is alive.

The hard and stiff will be broken.
The soft and supple will prevail.

The gentle overcomes the rigid.
True words seem paradoxical.

Failure is a new opportunity.
There is no need to blame.

No one can insult me.
Since, I have no respect.

No one can defeat me.
Since, I'm already defeated.

No one can kill me.
Since, I'm already dead.

I don’t know about others.
But I can say about myself.

I’m not the body, nor mind.
I’m not the doer, nor enjoyer.

The thoughts come and go.
The body acts by itself.

Things emerge and return to source.
I’m just the witness of everything.

The wise need not prove anything.
Those who prove are not wise.